

a voice
for the natural
landscaping
movement



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The membership fee is
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Why Wild Ones?

by Portia Brown

As more and more of us acknowledge the value of environmental stewardship, we seek ways to help. We may contribute to organizations that work to protect the natural world in a wide variety of ways and places. Many of these groups tackle highly significant "big picture" issues, like saving sacred places such as the Arctic Wildlife Refuge, like agricultural health (from pesticides, antibiotics, and genetic engineering to saving family farms), like air and water quality. . .the list goes on. There is much important work to be done and many ways to do it.

So why Wild Ones? After all, we don't lobby in Washington — indeed, as an organization, we stay out of politics, and we don't have teams of scientists working in the rain forests or in other endangered habitats. Sure, Wild Ones encourages environmentally sound practices such as less mowing, less lawn, fewer pesticides, and less fertilizer. We also promote the use of native plant communities that provide habitat for indigenous species. But more than that, Wild Ones encourages us to establish a personal relationship with the natural world, a relationship that literally invites native plants and wildlife back into our immediate lives.

Perhaps right there in the words "immediate lives" we touch on that which is most significant in the natural landscaping movement Wild Ones seeks to promote. When we get up close and personal with the natural world over which we have dominion — be it our own urban/suburban yard, a community park or schoolyard, or even a small balcony of potted plants — the whole environmental movement is viewed in a different light. In many ways we are better able to evaluate the information we receive from distant places precisely because we have chosen to establish an intimacy with the natural world in the place where we live and work.

If you talk to the animals
they will talk with you
and you will know each other.
If you do not talk to them,
you will not know them,
And what you do not know
you will fear.

What one fears one destroys.

—Chief Dan George

This quotation from Chief Dan George says it well and I am confident that in practice his reference to talking with the animals includes plants. Our ancestors lived in constant awareness of the natural world around them and shaped their activities accordingly. While no one is suggesting that we abandon the comfortable homes and work places of the modern world, Wild Ones asks us to accept and appreciate natural forces, to invite nature and natural order into our lives again, and in so doing, become a part of a healthier continuum between society and the natural world. ♻️

Portia Brown is co-president, with her husband Jerry, of the Louisville (KY) Chapter and secretary of the national board of directors. Portia also supplied the artwork for this article.

